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Letter dated 3 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

With reference to the letter dated 3 February 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/52/70-S/1997/108), I should like to reiterate certain observations that I deem to be indispensable in the light of Israel's insistence on continuing to ignore public opinion and on seeking to confuse and mislead it.

The tense situation in southern Lebanon and the escalation of violence there are the result of Israel's continued occupation of parts of Lebanese territory. This occupation has brought the Lebanese many human tragedies and much destruction and hardship, and it violates the norms of international law and the resolutions of the Security Council, especially its resolution 425 (1978) calling upon Israel to end its occupation, to cease its military actions against Lebanese territorial integrity and to withdraw forthwith its forces from all Lebanese territory.

Lebanon has time and again expressed its readiness to ensure security and the rule of law in southern Lebanon immediately on the withdrawal by Israel of its occupying forces in implementation of resolution 425 (1978), and this has been conveyed by its senior representatives in the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council and in many official statements issued by the Lebanese Government.

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Lebanon has always cooperated with the United Nations and with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which operates in the south of the country, and the reports of the Secretary-General and the resolutions of the Security Council have commended the constancy of such cooperation. In his statement on behalf of the members of the Security Council following the adoption of resolution 1095 (1997) on 28 January 1997 (S/PRST/1997/1), the President of the Council commended the Lebanese Government for its successful effort to extend its authority in the south of the country in full coordination with UNIFIL.

As against this, Israel has not hesitated to proclaim its lack of trust in the Organization whenever the opportunity presents itself. It has not been reluctant to confront UNIFIL, and it has frequently shelled its positions and inflicted casualties on it.

Perhaps the best attestation to this fact is the deliberate shelling of the headquarters of the Fijian contingent of UNIFIL on 18 April 1996, which killed 120 civilians, most of them women, children and older persons who had taken refuge in the compound in the mistaken belief that they would there be safe from Israeli shelling. (See the report of the Secretary-General contained in document S/1996/337 of 7 May 1996.) The General Assembly, by its resolution 50/22 C of 25 April 1996, subsequently condemned the Israeli shelling of the UNIFIL compound.

We repeat that the actions that the representative of Israel refers to as acts of terrorism are acts of resistance to occupation and are directed against military elements of the occupation forces. They are actions that have the purpose of liberating national territory from foreign occupation, and they arose as a reaction to the occupation and in self-defence, it being an intrinsic right of peoples to defend themselves pursuant to the relevant international covenants and in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the various declarations adopted by the General Assembly in this regard, most recently the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations adopted by the Assembly in its resolution 50/6 of 24 October 1995.

The Lebanese Government has affirmed its commitment to the goals of the Madrid Conference and to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the principle of land for peace. Lebanon considers that the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls upon Israel to withdraw from the Lebanese territory it occupies to the internationally recognized boundaries, remains a basic condition for the achievement of peace.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 155 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Samir MOUBARAK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative